United Nations S/2013/112

Security Council

Distr.: General
26 February 2013

Original: English

Letter dated 25 February 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 8 February 2013 (received on 22 February) from Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, on behalf of the co-chairs of the Support and Follow-up Group on the situation in Mali, forwarding the communiqué of the third meeting of the Group, held in Brussels on 5 February 2013 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

Letter dated 8 February 2013 from the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the co-chairs of the Support and Follow-up Group, I have the honour to forward herewith the conclusions of the third meeting of the Group, held in Brussels on 5 February 2013.

The meeting took place against the background of encouraging developments both on the ground, with the liberation of major cities in the northern part of Mali, and in the political process, with the adoption of the Transition Road Map. The meeting afforded an opportunity to review the situation, interact with the delegation of the Malian Government and agree on the best way forward. The conclusions of the meeting provide a sound framework for concerted international action in support of the Malian authorities and stakeholders and in furtherance of our common objective of fully restoring State authority over the entire Malian territory, facilitating the early conclusion of the transition, notably through the holding of free, fair and transparent elections; addressing the root causes of the multidimensional crisis facing Mali; and effectively supporting the overall efforts to stabilize the Sahel region.

In the coming weeks, the African Union will work closely with the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States to follow up actively the implementation of the conclusions of the Brussels meeting, I have no doubt that we can count on your personal support,

On behalf of the co-chairs and the Group as a whole, I would be most grateful if the attached conclusions (see enclosure) were circulated as a document of the Security Council so that they could inform further decisions by this organ on the situation in Mali and the Sahel.

(*Signed*) Ramtane **Lamamra**
Commissioner, Peace and Security

Enclosure

Conclusion of the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali

5 February 2013
Brussels

1. The Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali held its third meeting in Brussels, on 5 February 2013, as a follow-up to the meetings held in Abidjan, on 7 June 2012, and Bamako, on 19 October 2012. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mali, Tiernan Hubert Caulibaly, the Minister for Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, Mousse Sinko Coulibaly, and the Minister for Humanitarian Action, Mamadou Sidibe, participated in the meeting. Foreign Ministers and other senior officials of the countries of the region and other African Union (AU) Member States, as well as bilateral and multilateral international partners, also participated in the meeting. This meeting, hosted by the European Union (EU), represented by Catherine Ashton, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was co-chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ramtane Lamamra, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, and the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Kadre Desire Ouedraogo. The AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, Special Representative and Head of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), Pierre Buyoya, also attended the meeting.

2. The meeting afforded the participants an opportunity to consider the latest developments in the situation in Mali and to interact with the Malian delegation on the way forward.

3. The participants recalled that their Bamako meeting of 19 October 2012 constituted a decisive step in enhancing the support of the international community for Mali, and enabled the Malian stakeholders to take ownership of the efforts to find a lasting solution to the multidimensional crisis facing their country. They noted with satisfaction that the present meeting was being held against the background of the liberation of major towns in the north of the country and encouraging prospects for the conclusion of the Transition.

4. The participants strongly condemned the attack launched, on 10 January 2013, by the armed terrorist and criminal groups against the positions of the Malian army in the Mopti area, and the crimes against civilians and other violations of international humanitarian law committed by them, including the destruction of monuments and manuscripts of historical, cultural and religious significance. They also strongly condemned the terrorist attack at the In Amenas gas plant in Algeria. They reiterated the need to continue the fight against terrorism and criminal networks and to enhance cooperation among all the actors concerned.

5. The participants welcomed the remarkable progress made on the ground, as the Government has regained control of the major towns in the northern part of the country, following the military operations carried out with the crucial support of France to counter the offensive launched by the armed terrorist and criminal groups. They expressed their deep appreciation for the prompt and effective support given

by France at the request of the Government of Mali and ECOWAS, within the framework of international legality.

6. The participants also welcomed the commencement of the deployment of AFISMA, stressing the need to speed up the process in order to consolidate the gains made on the ground. In this regard, they appealed to all the countries and organizations concerned to quickly fulfil the pledges they made at the donors' conference held in Addis Ababa, on 29 January 2013, by confirming, within the next 10 days, the modalities of disbursement and utilization of their contributions. They requested the AU, ECOWAS and the United Nations, in consultation with the Malian authorities, to ensure the necessary follow-up.

7. Similarly, the participants noted the importance of building the capacity of the Malian Defence and Security Forces to enable them to take charge of the security of the Malian territory. They welcomed the existing bilateral cooperation programmes with Mali, as well as the launching of the EU Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali. On that score, they called upon other partners to contribute to these capacity-building efforts. They welcomed the readiness of the EU speedily to provide, within the framework of the AMANI AFRICA Cycle and the African Peace Facility capacity-building programme, an Information, Communication, Command and Control System (C3IS) for use by AFISMA. They underscored the need for additional support, particularly from countries which could not, because of various constraints, make pledges on the occasion of the Addis Ababa donors' conference, to enable AFISMA to operate in the most conducive conditions and effectively to discharge its mandate of helping Mali to liberate all the occupied territories, ensure the security of the institutions and the population, and stabilize the security environment in the country. The participants noted with satisfaction the establishment of the Mali Integrated Task Force (MITF), with which Mali will be associated. They also commended the appointment of former President Pierre Buyoya, as Special Representative and Head of AFISMA, as well as the appointments of the Commander of the AFISMA military component and the Head of its police component.

8. The participants were informed about the ongoing efforts to revise the AFISMA Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and to increase its authorized strength, as requested by the communiqué of the 353th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), held on 25 January 2013, in order better to take into account the changed situation, They urged the AU, ECOWAS, the United Nations, the EU and other actors concerned, to expedite the process, so as to enable the United Nations Security Council, once the revised CONOPS has been approved by the AU PSC, to consider the document and endorse it. They expressed the hope that the Security Council would authorize the establishment of a support package funded by United Nations assessed contributions and, in the meantime, urged it to consider the setting-up of transitional arrangements to facilitate the deployment of AFISMA and the effective conduct of its operations. Similarly, a number of participants expressed the hope that the Security Council would positively consider the change, at the appropriate time, of AFISMA into a United Nations operation, with an appropriate mandate, determined in consultation with Mali, and contributing towards strengthening the Malian State's authority over its entire territory and the safeguard of the country's unity and territorial integrity.

9. The participants reiterated the crucial importance of cooperation among the neighbouring countries of Mali on intelligence and border-control, in order to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to counter terrorist and criminal networks and facilitate the implementation of the AFISMA mandate. In this regard, they urged the AU Commission to organize, as soon as possible, the envisaged meeting among Mali's neighbours to agree on concrete cooperation modalities and increase the effectiveness of existing mechanisms, as well as initiate a consultation process that would lead to the establishment of security arrangements for the Sahelo-Saharan region, within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

10. The participants stressed the need for the Malian authorities to do everything in their power to avoid acts of retaliation and other abuses in the liberated areas. They took note of the assurance given by the Malian Government and the measures envisaged within the Transition Road Map to promote local reconciliation and an all-inclusive national dialogue, ensure respect for human rights, and meet the most critical needs of the local populations. Within this context, they expressed their support to the coordinated deployment by the AU, ECOWAS and the United Nations, in consultation with the EU, of civilian observers, particularly in the liberated areas, to ensure observance of human rights and the strengthening of the protection of the civilian population, including women and children. They also stressed the need to include in the training of the Malian Defence and Security Forces modules on human rights and international humanitarian law. They took note of the efforts already made in this respect for AFISMA by the AU, ECOWAS and other partners.

11. The participants reiterated the urgent need for enhanced humanitarian support for the population affected by the crisis both within Mali and in the neighbouring countries, including the facilitation of the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees. To this end, they stressed the need to enhance the resilience of the local populations to address the issues of food security and malnutrition, as well as access to education, medical care and psychological support. They called upon the humanitarian actors to find with the Government the best ways and means of enhancing coordination of efforts.

12. The participants welcomed the adoption by the Government of Mali of the Road Map for the Transition and its subsequent approval by the National Assembly. They urged all the Malian stakeholders to implement all elements of the Road Map scrupulously. They reiterated their support for the authorities of the Transition, urging them to assume their full responsibilities. With reference to the relevant decisions on the duration of the Transition, and considering the timetable for the organization of the general elections, the participants urged the Malian authorities, in consultation with ECOWAS, to take the necessary measures to maintain the present arrangements until the elections. They reiterated their warning to all individuals, whether civilian or military, who interfere with the Transition or the functioning of the military chain of command, under the control of the civilian authorities, to desist from doing so.

13. The participants appealed to Mali's bilateral and multilateral partners to supplement the resources mobilized by Mali, with the provision of additional funding, towards the implementation of the various components of the Road Map. In this regard, they encouraged Mali's partners to speed-up the resumption of development cooperation, and noted with satisfaction the measures envisaged by the EU in this respect.

14. The participants took note of the briefing by the Malian delegation regarding the feasibility of organizing legislative and presidential elections in July 2013, They requested all the international organizations concerned and the other partners of Mali to closely coordinate their efforts to facilitate the electoral process and to endeavour, in this regard, in concert with the relevant Malian authorities, to establish an appropriate mechanism that would guarantee the credibility of the electoral process. They requested the speedy establishment, in Bamako, of an electoral assistance coordination cell, bringing together all stakeholders, under the facilitation of the Special Representative and Head of AFISMA. They encouraged the Malian authorities to extend the necessary cooperation to their international partners, in order to facilitate electoral observation and assistance. Furthermore, the participants requested the Malian Defence and Security Forces and AFISMA to take the necessary measures to secure the electoral process.

15. The participants noted with satisfaction the decision of the Malian authorities to establish, during the month of February 2013, a Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission, as an important measure to enable the Malian actors to own the negotiation process, including with the Malian armed groups that unconditionally commit themselves to respect the unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and the Constitution of Mali, sever any link with the terrorist and criminal groups and unequivocally renounce armed struggle as a means to further political claims, including by disarming themselves. They requested ECOWAS, the AU and the United Nations to support and facilitate, as required, the efforts of the Malian stakeholders.

16. The participants pointed out that the recurrent crises in Mali emanate from underlying problems linked to governance deficit, inadequate State structures, poverty and other related factors, particularly in the northern part of the country. Consequently, any lasting solution requires a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of the multidimensional crisis facing Mali. In this regard, the participants expressed satisfaction at the approach articulated in the Road Map. They encouraged the Malian authorities and all other stakeholders to work within this framework and to place their action within such a long-term and holistic approach to the problems faced by Mali. Having recalled the relevance of the Strategic Concept, adopted at their meeting, held in Bamako, on 19 October 2012, they committed themselves to support the efforts of the Malian stakeholders, including by mobilizing resources in a predictable and flexible manner.

17. Against this background, the participants urged the Government of Mali to initiate an all-inclusive national dialogue addressing all the challenges at hand to reach a consensus on the measures to be taken to strengthen governance, bring the Malian State closer to the citizens and address, in a more effective manner, the challenges of poverty and marginalization of the peripheral regions. They requested the Malian Government to keep the Support and Follow-up Group regularly informed about the efforts made and expressed their support for the planned convening of a round table of donors and friends of Mali, as provided in the Road Map.

18. The participants had an in-depth exchange of views on the situation in the Sahel region. In this regard, they agreed on the need for greater coordination of efforts and sustained support of the international community, particularly in the area of socioeconomic development and environment. They requested the United Nations

Secretary-General Special Envoy for the Sahel, Romano Prodi, in consultation with the countries of the region, ECOWAS, AU, particularly NEPAD, the EU, the United Nations and international financial institutions and other relevant actors, to identify the actions to be carried out in the short, medium and long-terms, in order better to support the regional efforts aimed at promoting lasting peace, security, stability and development, including the identification of projects with regional impact. This review will be considered at the next meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group and will serve as basis for the preparation and holding, as quickly as possible, of an international conference on peace, security, stability, cooperation and development in the Sahel.

19. The participants agreed to convene their next meeting in Bamako, in March 2013. In the meantime, they requested the local representatives of the members of the Support and Follow-up Group to meet regularly, under the aegis of Special Representative and Head of AFISMA, to exchange views on the development of the situation and coordinate international support to the efforts of the Malian stakeholders.

20. The participants thanked the EU for hosting the meeting and for the excellent arrangements made to ensure the smooth running of the proceedings.